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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 04/24/06

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3) Ozawa-led Minshuto wins Lower House by-election in Chiba's No. 7 district by slim margin of 955 votes; LDP suffers stinging defeat

SANKEI (Top Play) (Lead Paragraph)  
April 24, 2006

Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) candidate Kazumi Ota, 26, a former Chiba Prefectural Assembly member, defeated Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) candidate Ken Saito, 46, former vice governor of Saitama Prefecture, by a narrow margin of 955 votes in a House of Representatives by-election in Chiba's No. 7 district yesterday. With victory in the first election conducted under his leadership, Minshuto President Ichiro Ozawa now has a basis for turning up the heat on the ruling coalition. Meanwhile, the LDP, which played up the continuation of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's reform drive, has suffered a stinging defeat. The expectation is that Koizumi's grip on the party will weaken. The result of Sunday's Lower House by-election will inevitably affect the September LDP presidential race, with an eye on next summer's House of Councillors election.

4) Minshuto to draw clear line from ruling coalition at second half of Diet session; Ruling camp to plays up continuation of

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reform drive, Minshuto to pursue social divide issue

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 24, 2006

In the wake of its victory in a House of Representatives by-election for the Chiba No. 7 constituency, the main opposition party Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) intends to engage in heated debate in the second half of the current Diet session, calling for correction of the growing social disparity and other related issues that reflect the negative effects of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's reform program. The ruling coalition is determined to pass such key bills as one to promote administrative reforms, as well as a bill to reform the medical system. The ruling camp will also pledge to carry out the reform policy line. There is a possibility that the ruling and opposition camps will head for another showdown on the Koizumi reform drive as they did in the first half of the ongoing Diet session.

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Tsutomu Takebe stated at a press conference yesterday on his party's Diet management in the future, "We will deal with Diet business as a different matter from the result of the election." A senior LDP member indicated there would no change in the reform policy line, saying, "With the next House of Councillors election in mind, we should not change our present policy line to a policy course to bring about large government and tax hikes."

The ruling parties intend to pass the administrative reform and medical reform bills before the end of May. They also plan to come up in June with a process for a plan to reform the revenue and expenditure systems in order to continue the ongoing reform program even after Prime Minister Koizumi steps down from office.

"Many people are unhappy with and worried about Japan's present politics," Minshuto President Ichiro Ozawa said after his party's candidate won yesterday's by-election. He has now assumed the stance of facing down the ruling coalition. The largest opposition party intends to pursue the "dark side" of the Koizumi reform drive, including the widening social disparity?

5) Katsusuke Ihara wins Iwakuni mayoral election; Calls it "citizens' victory" for saying "no" to US military relocation

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 23) (Full)  
April 24, 2006

Iwakuni City yesterday elected as its first mayor since its merger Katsusuke Ihara, 55, who has called for scrapping a plan to relocate US carrier-based aircraft to the local US Marine Corps base. The election was held a month and a half since an overwhelming majority of Iwakuni voters expressed their opposition to the plan in a March referendum. Ihara commented:

"It is a victory for the citizens, who expressed their good sense."

When TV news reported at around 9:45 p.m. that Ihara was sure to be elected, supporters in his office burst into applause. Appearing before them, Ihara categorically told them: "I know the outcry of the local citizens toward the relocation plan. I want the central government to take their voices seriously and discuss

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the issue with local communities."

Ihara carried out a grass-roots campaign. Sumie Tanaka, 69, a housewife, said: "I don't want to hand down the burden of US bases to our children and grandchildren. I want the mayor to transmit the voice of we at the local level to the central government."

Taro Asjimura, 38, who was defeated by Ihara, bowed profoundly and said, "I'm sorry I was unable to meet your expectations."

6) Ihara wins Iwakuni mayoral election; Government determined to push for relocation plan

ASAHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
April 24, 2006

Katsusuke Ihara, the former Iwakuni mayor who opposes the planned relocation of US carrier-based aircraft to the US Marine Corps' base in the city, won the mayoral election yesterday in Iwakuni, Yamaguchi Prefecture. In response, Defense Agency Director General Nukaga said: "We will make utmost efforts to obtain local understanding and cooperation," but the government is determined to forge ahead with the realignment plan as agreed on between Japan and the US. In the government and ruling camp, however, many officials have voiced concerns about the impact of Ihara's victory on the plan, which is scheduled to start in fiscal 2008 or after. The government will have to pay the price for having put efforts to obtain local understanding on the backburner, as was the case with the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe released a comment last night saying, "I am disappointed with the election result, but we will continue our efforts to explain US military base issues to the citizens in a sincere manner."

Ihara is calling on the government to withdraw the relocation plan, but the government has no intention to comply with it, as Foreign Minister Aso said: "National defense is an issue that should be controlled exclusively by the government." The central government intends to include the plan in a final report being worked out by Japan and the US and to move it forward.

In its efforts to obtain understanding from the local communities involved in the plan to realign US military forces in Japan, the government gave top priority to winning agreement from Nago City for the Futenma issue. Relocation work involving Iwakuni will start in or after fiscal 2008, when the construction of an offshore runway is to be completed. Now that the government has won agreement from the Nago municipal government, it is determined to push ahead with the entire US force realignment plan.

7) Ruling party candidates being defeated in number of mayoral elections across nation, including Iwakuni

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 1) (Full)  
April 24, 2006

The ruling parties yesterday lost a number of mayoral elections that were in the public spotlight, including the Iwakuni mayoral election in Yamaguchi Prefecture, where the campaign issue was how to respond to the US aircraft carrier-borne jet transfer

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plan.

Twenty-six mayoral elections took place yesterday, because elections for local government heads coincided with major municipal mergers in late March.

In Iwakuni, former Mayor Katsusuke Ihara (55), who has called for the withdrawal of the US military relocation plan, was returned to office after the merger to become the first mayor of the enlarged city. He beat LDP-backed company president Taro Ajimura (38). Ajimura supported a pragmatic policy of seeking development measures in return for the acceptance of the relocation plan, but he failed to beat Ihara.

In the Okinawa mayoral election in Okinawa prefecture, too, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)-backed former Lower House member Mitsuko Tomon (63), who is against the joint use of US forces Kadena Air Base with the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), defeated former municipal assembly member Sachio Kuwae (50), endorsed by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the New Komeito.

Commenting on the LDP-backed candidates' defeats in the Iwakuni and Okinawa mayoral elections, Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe released a statement: "The results are regrettable. However, the government would like to offer explanations on the base issue in a sincere manner."

New independent candidate Toshinao Nakagawa (35), the second son of LDP Policy Research Council chairman Hidenao Nakagawa and a former secretary to him, ran in the Higashi-Hiroshima mayoral race in Hiroshima Prefecture. He was defeated by new independent candidate Yoshio Kurata (54), a former prefectural assembly member.

8) Nukaga meets Ambassador Schieffer prior to meeting with Rumsfeld on Guam relocation

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 24, 2006

Masahiro Tsuruoka, Washington

Over the issue of Japan's share of the cost of relocating Okinawa-based Marines to Guam, Defense Agency Director General Nukaga, now visiting the US, met with Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Lawless and Ambassador to Japan Schieffer at a hotel in suburban Washington for about one hour on the afternoon of April 22, local time. Nukaga is scheduled to meet with Defense Secretary Rumsfeld on the evening of April 23. Observers surmise that Nukaga tried to seek out common ground prior to the meeting with Rumsfeld.

9) US to reduce Japan's share of cost for relocating Okinawa-based Marines to Guam, reconsidering cost for constructing housing

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 24, 2006

Takashi Imai, Washington

Defense Agency Director General Nukaga, now visiting the US, met

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Deputy Undersecretary of Defense Lawless and Ambassador to Japan Schieffer at a hotel in the Washington suburbs on the afternoon of April 22, local time, to discuss Japan's share of the cost to relocate Okinawa-based Marines to Guam. The US has indicated that it would reduce the estimate cost for constructing housing for troops and their families from 2.55 billion dollars (283 billion yen on the basis of the exchange rate used for the fiscal 2006 budget) to about 2.1 billion dollars. The US has so far asked Japan to pay 75% of the 9.5 billion dollars (1.545 trillion yen) in the total Guam transfer cost. Reflecting the proposed reduction in the housing cost, Lawless told Nukaga that the US would reconsider Japan's share. Nukaga also promised that Japan

would provide a certain amount of grant aid, in addition to the already announced loans worth about 3 billion dollars (333 billion yen). Lawless and Nukaga agreed on the need that a settlement should be reached during a meeting between Nukaga and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld set for the afternoon of April 23, local time. Nukaga told reporters on the evening of April 22: "There are many points now that we share a common understanding."

10) Settlement of Guam relocation cost remains fluid; Likely to be resolved at defense summit level

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)  
April 24, 2006

By Naohisa Nakazawa in Washington

Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga, who is now visiting the United States, will meet with Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld on the evening of the 23rd (early morning of the 24th, Japan time) to resolve the issue of the cost of relocating Marines stationed on Okinawa to Guam -- the remaining focal point of attention in the realignment of US forces in Japan.

Prior to the meeting, Nukaga met on the afternoon of April 22 (early on the 23rd, Japan time) with US Ambassador to Japan Schieffer and Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Lawless at his hotel. There being no apparent progress in the talks, the situation remains fluid whether the issue of Japan's share of the cost can be resolved in the summit meeting of defense chiefs.

Director General Nukaga, after his meeting with Schieffer and Lawless, told the press corps: "It is important to set up the playing field (for debate). I will do my best so that both sides will have a mutual recognition of the problem." The defense chief also said: "Little by little, we are moving closer to a common position."

11) Japan, U.S. agree on costs for moving Marines to Guam: Nukaga

KYODO --- WASHINGTON,  
April 24 KYODO

Japan and the United States struck a deal Sunday on sharing the costs of relocating 8,000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam, Japanese Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga said after a meeting with his U.S. counterpart.

Nukaga said he and U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld agreed that Japan will shoulder 59% of the total cost of \$10.27 billion, or \$6.09 billion, including grants and loans.

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After the meeting, Nukaga told reporters the two agreed on the cost sharing and all other points related to the relocation issue. Rumsfeld said they reached common understanding in a way that will be beneficial for both sides.

Japan's share of cost is broken down to \$2.8 billion in grants, \$1.5 billion in investments and \$1.79 billion in loans, according to Nukaga.

Tokyo and Washington had been at odds over Tokyo's share for the Guam relocation cost. The U.S. side had asked Japan to pay 75%, or \$7.5 billion, and the Japanese side had offered to grant \$3 billion and loan another \$3 billion.

The meeting between the defense chiefs was held after failing in several rounds of senior working-level talks to nail down the share to pave the way for completing an implementation plan for an overall package of agreements they reached last October to realign the U.S. military presence in Japan.

Now that they have an agreement, the two nations now hope to make final arrangements at another round of senior working-level talks Monday and Tuesday in Washington to set the stage for a top

security meeting of defense and foreign affairs ministers early next month to finalize the overall implementation plan.

12) Japan calls off maritime survey near Takeshima, South Korea shelves plan to propose Korean names for seafloor topography; Agreement reached to conduct demarcation talks in May

ASAHI (Top play) (Excerpts)  
April 23, 2006

Hayami Ichikawa, Seoul

An agreement was reached in Japan-South Korea vice-ministerial talks yesterday on Japan's planned maritime survey in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), claimed by both Japan and South Korea, near Takeshima, known as Dokdo in South Korea, that South Korea would not propose Korean names for the seafloor topography near the disputed islets at an international conference in June and that Japan in return would not conduct the maritime survey. The two sides also agreed to resume director-general-level talks in May on the demarcation of EEZs near Takeshima. South Korea threatened that if Japan carried out the maritime survey, it would not hesitate to seize Japanese survey vessels. But a clash with South Korea has been averted for the time being.

Following the session April 21, Administrative Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi held talks intermittently with South Korean First Vice Minister Yu Myung Hwan for nearly 10 hours at a Seoul hotel yesterday.

After the talks, Yachi told reporters:

"We both explained our respective positions fully and finally managed to cut a package deal. We exchanged views severely, and it was hard to find a settlement line."

He also said about Japan's proposal for establishing a system requiring the two countries to notify each other before

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conducting a maritime survey in the area where the two countries' EEZs overlap, "South Korea was not in a mood to accept Japan's proposal."

Despite compromise, source of territorial row remains

Commentary

Japan and South Korea both made compromises April 22 regarding the issue of Japan's planned maritime survey in the Sea of Japan in a bid to avert a clash. In shelving its plan to propose Korean names for seafloor topography, South Korea affirmed its standpoint of making proposals "at a time of its choosing." As a result, Seoul would not come under fire from the hard-liners in the country for backtracking its standpoint. But the source of the Takeshima row with South Korea still remains.

13) Government, ruling parties come out with views favoring consideration of new rules regarding maritime surveys around Takeshima, naming of topographical features

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Excerpt)  
April 24, 2006

Although the government and ruling camp yesterday gave high marks to the resolution of the issue of the maritime survey in waters around Takeshima (Korean name, Dokdo) that avoided a worst-case scenario, the views coming out one after the other seek as the next challenge the creation of rules regarding such surveys and the naming of underwater features. Liberal Democratic Party Policy Research Council Chairman Hidenao Nakagawa, appearing on Fuji TV yesterday, said: "It would be better to study jointly (between Japan and South Korea) the problem of naming underwater geological features." National Land and Transportation Minister Kazuo Kitagawa stressed the setting up rules for maritime research in negotiations on setting a boundary line for the EEZ.

14) Government to earnestly consider GSDF pullout from Iraq;  
Foreign Ministry official: Critical stage is over with  
designation of al-Maliki

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 24, 2004

The government hails great progress made in Iraq's political process, as seen in the designation of Jawad al-Maliki as its new prime minister. The government plans to speed up preparations for resuming yen loans to the country for the first time in about 20 years, as well as seriously considering a timeline for withdrawing Ground Self-Defense Force troops from the southern Iraqi city of Samawah, meaning that the stage is being set for a pullout.

Following the designation of al-Maliki as the new Iraqi prime minister, Foreign Ministry Press Secretary Yoshinori Katori released a statement yesterday reading, "Japan welcomes his appointment as a great stride toward the establishment of a new government under national unity."

A senior Foreign Ministry official said:

"The most critical stage is now over for the establishment of a

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permanent government. We need to watch closely the process of appointing new cabinet ministers. It should go smoothly, because the transitional government has formed a cabinet once."

The government hopes to reach a formal agreement with a permanent Iraqi government in May on the implementation of yen-loan projects, including those for port improvement and irrigation, worth about 76.5 billion yen. The government also intends to invite to Japan senior Iraqi government officials, including top-level leaders.

The government initially envisaged beginning a GSDF pullout in late March and wrapping it up in May. But the timetable has been slipping due to a delay in the establishment of a new Iraqi government because of sectarian clashes. The government is expected to issue an order to dispatch the 10th GSDF contingent to Iraq later this month to replace the 9th contingent in late May. A withdrawal may not begin until June or later. The government is poised to determine a timeline for withdrawal while watching the formation of a formal Iraqi government and other factors.

15) Japan, Iran talks on nuclear development issue end in failure

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
April 23, 2006

By Takayuki Haruhi in Teheran

Middle East-Africa Bureau Director General Motoi Yoshikawa of the Foreign Ministry met on April 22 in Teheran with Iran's vice foreign minister for Asian affairs and other officials. The talks centered on Iran's nuclear development issue, but ended along divergent lines. Japan on April 11 expressed its regret that Iran had announced its successful enrichment of uranium. The Iranian government rebutted: "We will not change from our previous position of using nuclear energy for peaceful use."

16) Japanese, US finance ministers discuss review of IMF quota system to correct under-representation of emerging economies in Asia

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 1) (Excerpts)  
April 24, 2006

Masakuni Mizu, Washington

Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki, currently visiting the US,



met with US Treasury Secretary Snow for about 30 minutes on the afternoon of April 22, local time. During the meeting, the two agreed to discuss a review of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) quota system used for allotting voting power. In the IMF, the US and European countries have now strong clout. The proposed revision is aimed to correct the current under-presentation of emerging economies in Asia and other regions.

In a meeting of the IMF International Monetary Financial Committee held prior to the finance ministerial, the participants agreed to have the IMF senior director submit a revision plan with an eye to the September annual assembly. In the Japan-US finance ministerial, Snow, who was cautious about IMF reform, also showed understanding.

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Should the IMF quota system be reviewed, emerging economies, such as China and South Korea, will have increased voting power, while that of some European countries will decrease. Such countries will certainly raise objections to the proposed revision of the quota system.

17) Second ban on US potato imports due to new finding of pests

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Full)  
April 22, 2006

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) yesterday announced a ban on US potato imports, which had been allowed with conditions, such as that imported products should be used only for potato chips. The move follows the discovery of pests at a farm in Idaho. The import embargo had been lifted only a little over two months ago.

Japan had suspended US potato imports due to the breeding of potato cyst nematodes, but the US called on Japan to import US potatoes for potato chips from areas where such pests had not been found. MAFF then lifted the ban on the imports of US potatoes from 14 states, including Idaho for the February-June period. Approximately 430 tons had thus far been imported.

However, following the finding of white potato cyst nematodes, which are harmful to potatoes, in Idaho in April, MAFF decided to suspend the potato imports from all over the US.

DONOVAN